

The Illusion of Immediacy – Medial Aspects of Paul Celan’s Poetry

Introduction

In the present research paper I intend to examine one of the very important aspect of Paul Celan’s poetry – namely *mediality*, the problems of mediality and immediacy, highlighting how the problem of *mediatedness* by media and the impossibility of immediacy, and the fight against the medial nature of the world appear in several works by the poet.

Nowadays, we may speak about a number of types of media, that is why I think that it is worth examining poems that permit interpretations from the direction of mediality. First and foremost, perhaps it is worth investigating what Paul Celan could think about one of the most primordial media that were also considered an imperfect means of communication even in the age of the poet – a few words about language.

Language as Medium by Paul Celan

Paul Celan’s view about language is very controversial, and it has a dual nature. On the one hand, the poet wished to demolish the limits of human language considered as an imperfect medium for communication; on the other hand, Celan’s poetry permits an interpretation according to which he wanted to create a new poetic language that is beyond the human language used in everyday communication, even if not ceasing, but perhaps somehow reducing the mediatedness and mediality of the world. To illustrate this view of human

language, one of the author's well-known, programme-like poems entitled *Sprachgitter* – *Speech-Grille* may serve as a good example, in which Celan makes an effort to cease the limits of human language:

JOHN FELSTINER'S ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

“Speech-Grille

Eyes round between the bars.

Flittering lid,
paddles upward,
breaks a glance free.
Iris, the swimmer, dreamless and drab:
Heaven, heartgray, must be near.”

THE ORIGINAL GERMAN POEM:

“Sprachgitter

Augenrund zwischen den Stäben.

Flimmertier Lid
rudert nach oben,
gibt einen Blick frei.

Iris, Schwimmerin, traumlos und trüb:
der Himmel, herzgrau, muß nah sein.”

Metaphors – at least according to Celan’s concept – increase the distance between two subjects; that is, they increase the mediatedness by language, and it may be the metaphorical nature of language because of which there can be no clear communication mediating messages over the everyday language. If we have a glance at the lines cited above, we may see that the poetic images lack the reference to something, which would be the gist of the traditional definition of metaphor. As it is mentioned by Celan himself, it was the above poem in which he tried to conceive that he was bored with the permanent hide-and-seek game with metaphors. (Felstiner 1995: 106-107) Although the American monographer of the poet John Felstiner writes that at the time of writing *Speech-Grille*, in 1957 Celan did not yet completely cease the use of metaphors in his poems, but he did his best to divide them into an internal and an external reality. This way, symbolically, the mediatedness by language is not ceased, but it may be decreased, and words are perhaps able to speak to the reader in a more immediate way.

Celan’s fight against metaphors may be read as an experiment of the clearance of the language and the decrease of the mediatedness by language to some degree (Mihálycsa 1999). In the poems written later than *Speech-Grille* the words do not function as metaphors, do not refer to anything, only *stand* alone, constituting poetic realities (Bartók 2009: 29). The wish to clear language from metaphors also appears in one of Celan’s late, fairly known poem entitled *Ein Dröhnen – A rumbling*:

JOHN FELSTINER’S ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

A RUMBLING: it is
Truth itself
walked among

men,
amidst the
metaphor squall.

THE ORIGINAL GERMAN POEM:

EIN DRÖHNEN: es ist
die Wahrheit selbst
unter die Menschen
getreten,
mitten ins
Metapherngestöber.

That is, human language is not more for Celan than a *metaphor squall*, a chaotic medium lacking any sort of system. Some transcendent *Truth* walks down, among men amidst this chaotic squall of metaphors, and it may make us remember Nietzsche's theory about metaphors (Kiss 2003 : 112). According to Nietzsche – and it is no novelty for Linguistics – even linguistic commonplaces are metaphorical. Thinking after Celan, the language of our everyday life is an inadequate medium to mediate unambiguous information, because it is too medial and mediated. May there be *Truth* only if we conceive it in a language that is free of metaphors? The question evidently has no adequate answer, but based on Celan's above poem it may seem that a language cleared from metaphors could be able to express truths, and the cessation of *metaphoricalness* may decrease the multiple mediatedness and mediality of human pronunciations and experiences.

In some of Celan's poems, the poet perhaps tries to demolish, or at least by-pass the excessive mediatedness of human language by the method that

certain poems are not written in one of the concrete national languages, but the poet borrowed words from different foreign languages – that is, it is hard to establish in which language the given poem speaks, unless we do not count the words of different languages on a statistical basis. The poem entitled *In Eins – In One*, or at least the beginning verses of the poem can be a good example to this tendency:

JOHN FELSTINER'S ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

‘‘*In One*

Thirteenth February. In the heart's mouth an
awakaned shibboleth. With you,
Peuple
de Paris. *No pasarán.*’’

THE ORIGINAL GERMAN POEM:

„IN EINS

Dreizehnter Feber. Im Herzmund
erwachtes Schibboleth. Mit dir,
Peuple
de Paris. *No pasarán.*’’

The above extract was originally written in German (the English translation of the German elements also tends to cease the borders between languages), but foreign expressions can be found in it nearly in the same proportion. The word *shibboleth* (originally meaning river, but in the Bible it was a secret tribal password used at border-crossing) is from Hebrew, the expression *Peuple de*

Paris (people of Paris) is from French, while the expression *No pasarán* (they will not break through) is borrowed from Spanish. As for the poem, Derrida says that in the text a border-crossing takes place between different languages (Derrida 1994: 23-24). Although there is no doubt that the text of the above extract *is* a pronunciation in human languages, it is not easy to define in *which* language the poem speaks. The cessation of the medium of a concrete human language can also be interpreted as a poetic experiment to cease, or at least decrease mediality and mediatedness.

It may also seem that Celan's poetry treats the natural human language as a disaster (Lacoue-Labarthe 1996: 193-213). The poetic word wishes to demolish the limits constituted by the language of the everyday life, and necessarily, it wants to transgress these limits. The non-conventional words of Celan's poems and their new, surprising meanings also serve as the basis of this intention, since Celan ignores the earlier forms of poetic behaviour, and experiments to re-define the concept of *poeticness*.

There can also be a radical notion according to which poetry is not else but the cessation of language itself, and poetry *takes place* at the spot where language is already absent (Lacoue-Labarthe 1996: 199-200). This language certainly does not mean natural language, since if the poetic word is an autonomous entity, then poetry is not else but the liberations from limits. When the word *takes place*, that is, it is pronounced, the continuous speech is suspended, and the word as an autonomous entity rises above the system of the language, in a similar sense to Hölderlin's notion of *caesure* and *clear word* (Reines Wort). Celan's compound words created only in poetic constellations exist outside natural language; therefore, they may be treated as *clear words*. Poetry is constituted by the word that testifies human *being* and *presence*. This type of word is called by Celan *counter-word* (Gegenwort) in his speech called *Meridian*, after Georg Büchner's drama *Danton's Death* (Paul Celan 1996). Poetry's intention is to pronounce existence, mainly human being within it. The

gist of the pronunciation of existence is that although poetry cannot reverse the tragedy of the imperfection of human language and man's scepticism about language, but at least it writes down and archives the tragedy of language (Lacoue-Labarthe 1996).

Despite the fact that language can be experienced as a tragedy, it may seem that written, mainly literary texts and poetry is trying to fight against the extreme mediality and language's tendency to distance subjects from each other. Language may lose its accentuated role and become one medium among many, and maybe it is language's main tragedy (Lőrincz 2003 : 164). That is why I think that it is worth examining how written texts are represented in Celan's poetry as media.

Writing as Medium in Paul Celan's poetry

Writing and written texts, literary texts within them are recurring motifs in Paul Celan's poetry, and writing seems to appear a somewhat clearer medium than any other one.

Thinking with Gadamer, knowing Celan's cycle called *Atemkristall – Breath-crystall* the poem can be the medium of the encounter of "I" and "You" (Gadamer 1993). Although a poem is a medium consisting of language, the written text is evidently beyond the spoken language, since it is more imperishable – and at the same time, more material. This materiality, however, implies that a written text can place itself outside of its own historical existence, and a literary work may become a classical work (Gadamer 1984) that is historical, past and present at the same time – a material, that is, mediated entity, but at the same time existing outside the dimension of time, becoming immediate and in some sense transcendent.

Derrida highlights the primacy of the medium of writing and, despite the Saussurean paradigm, its original nature that may have been existed even before the appearance of language (Derrida 1991: 21-113). For Celan as a poet, writing

is evidently a primary medium, several poems by author refer to it, and although he apparently does not believe in the exquisite capability of mediation of language, following Derrida's thoughts it is imaginable that poetry / poetic texts can function as media beyond the spoken language, as according to Derrida writing can express any message much more clearly than a spoken text.

Poetry is the possible medium of the expression of superior messages. The truth value of these messages may remain undistorted, and beyond all of this we may think about non-linguistic, electronic and optical media, to which Celan's well-known poem entitled *Fadensonnen – Threadsuns* may refer (I will deal with it in detail later on).

One of Celan's late poems entitled *Das Wort Zur-Tiefe-Gehn – The word of in-depth-going* can also be interesting for us, since it contains strong references to the motif of writing:

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

THE WORD OF IN-DEPTH-GOING

that we have read.

The years, the words, since then.

We are still the same.

You know, the space is endless,
you know, you do not need to fly,
you know, what wrote itself in your eyes,
deepens the depths to us.

THE ORIGINAL GERMAN POEM:

DAS WORT VOM ZUR-TIEFE-GEHN

das wir gelesen haben.

Die Jahre, die Worte seither.

Wir sind es noch immer.

Weißt du, der Raum ist unendlich,
weißt du, du brauchst nicht zu fliegen,
weißt du, was sich in dein Aug schrieb,
vertieft uns die Tiefe.

In the closing lines of the poem something is *written*, writes itself to the poetic addressee, and this undefined entity *deepens the depths* (vertieft ... die Tiefe); that is, it is able to open up deeper spheres of sense. Eye is the medium of sight – based on the last verse of the poem above, we may conclude that writing, written text is a phenomenon that *written in the eyes of someone* is able to mediate messages that may not be mediated by spoken language. The writing of the text into the eye is an important motif, because one decodes any text through one's eye. Writing, written texts are primarily optical media which we are able to decode based on our sight.

We may even risk the statement that human life is organised by linearity and continuity because of the continuity of phonetic writing systems (McLuhan 1962: 47). Starting from this thesis of McLuhan we may presume an opposition between verbal and written culture, just like between visual and acoustic media.

Certainly, it is worth mentioning that one of the monographers of McLuhan completely doubts that writing would be a primarily visual medium, since it can operate as a reflected sight if the reader, for example, reads foreign texts, and these times he or she comprehends the meaning of the text without decoding the form (Miller 1971: 10). The phonetic alphabet does not only separate the sight and the sound, but also separates each meaning from the

phonemes signed by the letters, which results in meaningless letters referring to meaningless phonemes (McLuhan 1962).

Considering the same problem, we may cite George Steiner, according to whom the system of the phonetic alphabet and the printing that uses moveable letters based on it are not metaphysical inventions that are able to express transcendent messages – the reasons for their inventions is to be sought in the linear structures of the syntax of Indo-European languages (Steiner 1998: 253-257). However, this way writing would be degraded to a completely material level, while literature and literary texts may be able to express transcendent messages, even if the medium containing the message is physically tangible. As McLuhan states it, it is possible that writing makes texts uniform, but this uniformity concerns only the physical appearance, the medium of the work of art, but the artwork itself is able to remain unique.

Among others Walter J. Ong deals with the history and spread of printing and with the dominance of sight that in the history of humanity gradually replaced the dominance of hearing (Ong 1998: 245-269). Due to printing one has a different relation to texts already written by someone, since although handwritten texts counted as irreproducible, unique objects, in some cases artworks created by their author, printed texts are distanced from their author, are uniform in some sense, and can be reproduced in an unlimited number. Speaking about lyric poetry this revolution can lead to the conclusion that certain literary texts are able to mediate their complete message only in a printed form – for example, let us just think of the typographic image poems by E. E. Cummings. Apart from handwritten texts, printed texts can be treated as finished works, since they cannot be written any further. As for Paul Celan's poetry, it may have importance in the case of the late, hermetic poems by the author – these short poems consisting only of a few lines or words in many cases, are evidently finished texts, as for their printed form. In Celan's work even punctuation marks play an important role and may modify the opportunities of

interpretation. Some poems, as Derrida emphasises, are even *dated*, and the appearance of the date in some editions below the printed poem may also accentuate their finished character (Derrida 1994: 3-74).

Gadamer emphasises that written, literary texts can have some specific truth value. According to the traditional definitions, a text is poetic if it lacks the factor justifying the truth value of the utterance (Gadamer 1994: 188-201). Literary / poetic texts can be adequately *heard* only by the so-called interior ear. However, when Gadamer speaks about the interpretation of an artwork, he metaphorises it as *reading*. All artworks in the world must be *read* so that they should become *present* in the Heideggerian sense. As for Paul Celan's poems, we may state that a poetic text always carries some message and has some truth value – even if in a negative way. In Celan's case, the message is perhaps pronounced by its *withdrawal*, its negative form of pronunciation. In the 20th century literature a new norm of truth appeared that belongs to the essence of poetry (Gadamer 1994: 200). Celan's poems tell the truth to the reader in a way that by their hermetism, hard interpretability and self-enclosed nature *withdraw* themselves from the reader and from the word. The truth is expressed in a negative form, seemingly withdrawing itself from the poem, not explicitly stating itself. Connected to the metaphor according to which the whole understanding of the world is not else but *reading*, it may be worth having a glance at one of Celan's late poems entitled *Unlesbarkeit – Illegible*:

JOHN FELSTINER'S ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

ILLEGIBLE this
world. Everything doubled.

Staunch clocks
confirm the split hour,

hoarsely.

You, clamped in your depths,
climb out of yourself
for ever.

THE ORIGINAL GERMAN POEM:

UNLESBARKEIT dieser
Welt. Alles doppelt.

Die starken Uhren
geben der Spaltstunde recht,
heiser.

Du, in dein Tiefstes geklemmt,
entsteigst dir
für immer.

Based on this poem the *illegibility of the world* means that things, phenomena of the world in their complex relations cannot or can hardly be interpreted, understood in any way. The nature of all phenomena is *doubled*, on the one hand, they are visible and tangible, but there must be some hidden essence behind everything – and this hidden essence, this *behind* is not reachable or tangible. The only way to *read* the world, says Celan poem, may be that the subject should *climb out of oneself*, alienates oneself from one's own identity. In the state of this ecstasy one may experience the world in a more immediate, deeper way, at least in the world of Celan's poem. It is, certainly, only one of the

possible interpretations of the poem above, and it can be acceptable only in a poetic context, since it contradicts the hermeneutical principle according to which no form of understanding is possible without mediation and mediality.

Perhaps it is an acceptable reading of the text that literature, the literary text is some kind of partaking in some experience that would otherwise finally deny us itself. The art of the past, due to mediality and material representation, may serve the needs of the men of the present (Stierle 1996: 286). Following Gadamer, it is possible only through media – one cannot step out of historical time, and one's existence in time has its end. Certain artworks can become permanent within time, becoming classic works, and – even if it is not an adequate statement within scientific frameworks – they may place themselves out of space and time, becoming eternal.

Literary text can be an eminent example of the phenomenon when something is not an answer to some question, but the representation of real things within imaginary frames. Lyric poetry may be the best example of the often debated relationship of artworks and media. Poetry can also be interpreted as the transgression between the schemas of literary genres (Stierle 1996: 270). A literary text through the written / printed material mediates much more towards the reader than just itself. The “You” appearing in lyric poems, the addressee of a given text can always refer to several subjects, can have an inter-subjective character. Considering Celan's late poems often referring to themselves, it can be an interpretation that not simply the poetic speaker speaks to the reader / addressee, but the text becomes the speaker itself, and this way, the degree of mediatedness between speaker and addressee may be reduced. Even if the text of a poem is a phenomenon of language, something mediated by the medium of language, the artwork-character and literariness of the work fills the whole medium. After McLuhan's notion, in a poem the message and the medium may be able to become one, and speak to the addressee in a more immediate and less mediated manner, even if mediality cannot be completely

ceased. However, it seems that poetry, and in the present case Celan's hermetic poetry makes an attempt to cease the mediated nature of reality.

Possible References to Optical and Electronic Media in Celan's Poetry in the Mirror of the Poem Fadensonnen – Threadsuns

As stated above, writing, written and printed texts can be treated as optical media, it is only a question of approach. Paul Celan's poems permit the interpretation according to which written texts may be considered as a kind of primary medium, at least for the poet, and written texts are able to mediate and archive information and meanings which are lost or incompletely mediated in spoken language.

One of the fairly well-known poems by Celan may refer among others to the technicalising culture and optical and electronic media of our present. This poem is called *Fadensonnen – Threadsuns*.

JOHN FELSTINER'S ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

THREADSUNS

over the grayblack wasteness.

A tree-

high thought

strikes the light-tone: there are

still songs to sing beyond

humankind.

THE ORIGINAL GERMAN POEM:

FADENSONNEN

über der grauschwarzen Ödnis.
Ein baum-
hoher Gedanke
greift sich den Lichtton: es sind
noch Lieder zu singen jenseits
der Menschen.

The above poem, similarly to other minimalist and hermetic poems by Celan, permits several possible interpretations, even if the number of possible readings is not endless. The text consisting of only seven lines turned the attention of literary scholars to itself a number of times during its history of reception.. We may presume that the text speaks about not more than the transcendent character of poetry, and the *songs to sing beyond humankind* refer to transcendent meanings that cannot be mediated by everyday language, only by art, namely poetry (Gadamer 1997: 112). In parallel the poem permits an ironic interpretation, according to which nothing more exists *beyond humankind*, reaching the transcendent in any way is impossible, and the poetic speaker is only thinking about it in an ironic manner (Kiss 2003: 175-177), and this way under no circumstances can we take the statement of the last line serious.

The phrase *beyond humankind* and the songs sung there / from there may refer to the transcendent, metaphysical world beyond the visible universe (either the world of platonic ideas or the underworld in the religious sense), but it is also possible that this *beyond* is to be understood in time, in an age from where *humankind* has already disappeared in the physical sense.

Is it possible that Celan's poem does not only refer to mystical, transcendent entities and meanings, but also to the quickly evolving technical media of the poet's own age? It cannot be decided whether this interpretation is legitimate or arbitrary, but if we read Celan's poetry from the direction of mediality and mediatedness, it can evidently prove an interesting approach.

Examining the opening line of the poem the poetic text makes the reader *see thread*suns (the sun's radiation through the clouds?) over a certain *grayblack wasteness*. A landscape is presented to the reader; that is, the poetic text is based on the sight, the imaginary sight created by the power of the words before the eyes of the reader. As we read the text further, we may *read a tree-high* human *thought* that *strikes* the *light-tone*, which is an acoustic and optical medium at the same time. Light-tone, as John Felstiner translates it, *Lichtton* in German is not Celan's neologism, but an existing technical term used in film-making; that is, the name of an optical medium.

The technique called *Lichtton*, namely *Lichttonverfahren* in German, translated in English as *sound-on-film* (apart from Felstiner's possible misunderstanding / poetic interpretation of the text) refers to one of the oldest film-making technologies. It implies a class of [sound film](#) processes where the sound accompanying picture is physically recorded onto photographic film, usually, but not always, the same strip of film carrying the picture, and this process did not count as a very new technology even in Celan's age, in the middle of the 20th century. As the poem suggests, the human thought is *recorded on film* – mediated by light, an optical medium, and sound, an acoustic medium at the same time. The dual usage of these media may also make us remember the more developed technical media of the present days, for example DVD-player, television or the multi-medial, virtual world of the internet. Is it possible that this *striking* of the *light-tone* is, as a matter of fact, equal to the *songs beyond humankind*? The mystery of the connection between the opening and the closing lines of the poem may be solved by this interpretation.

Medial cultural techniques and the incredibly quick development of electronic technical media in the 20th century provided completely new types of experience to people, and in the modern age it also led to the radical change and re-formation of poetry (Ernő Kulcsár Szabó 2004: 166-178). Mechanical archiving systems and discourse networks were invented, discourses multiplied

themselves, and it is not clear at all to whom messages – if we can still speak about messages at all – are addressed in the seemingly chaotic context of human culture that is mediated multiple times. Medial changes also caused changes in the field of literature, and Celan's poem which has been interpreted many times, may be considered as the imprint of these changes.

It is Friedrich Kittler who states that no sense is possible without some kind of physical carrier, medium; that is, our human world and culture are necessarily mediated and medial. However, the notion of noise introduced by Shannon nearly always enters the process of mediation, disturbing factors never can be excluded (Kittler 2005: 455-474). Poetry is maybe one of the clearest manifestations of language, a use of language that in principle should not be disturbed by any noise. The gist of poetry is that it creates its elements as self-referential elements, and it was the well-known model of communication by Jakobson that increased the distance between sign and noise as large as possible. Poetry is a medium, a form of communication that defends itself against disturbing factors called *noises*. If we consider the hermetic poetics of Celan's works and their wish to place themselves out of space and time, out of all networks that can be disturbed by noises, then it can be interpreted as a wish for a kind of immediacy.

Despite all of this, nowadays, numberless kinds of noise shadow the communication in our culture. Today noise can also be technically manipulated, and it is even used to mediate secret, encoded messages, as it can be observed in secret technologies of military communication (Kittler 2005). The relationship between noise and sign has been gradually blurred since it became possible to manipulate their relationship and since the mathematically based communication systems became able to change the nature of noise. It may even lead to the conclusion that it is not certain at all that the addressee of certain messages can be called *man*. By and large it seems to be compatible with the possible

interpretation of Celan's poem according to which the addressee of the songs that are sung *beyond humankind* we necessarily cannot call man / human.

The conquest of the electronic and optical media and the strong tendency of technicalisation in our society make it possible to conclude that we can gain knowledge about our own senses only via media. Art and technical media can serve the goal to deceive human senses. The technical media of our days, similarly to Celan's poetry and the poems cited above, create fictional worlds, illusion. Furthermore, in some cases this illusion may be so perfect that even the definition of *reality* becomes questionable (Kittler 2005: 7-40). These medium are first and foremost optical, and only secondly acoustic, since for the man of the present day the sight, the vision is becoming more and more primary.

Optical and electronic media, compared to the historical past, treat symbolic contents in a completely new manner. While the human body in its own materiality still belongs to the (physical) reality, media are more and more becoming the embodiment of the imaginary, the unreal existence and bring this unreality closer and closer to man. Paul Celan's poem cited above may also turn our attention to this tendency. Perhaps it is worth speaking about technicalisation and the new types of media in a neutral manner, not judging them, but the extreme presence of technology in our society and the possible disappearance of *humankind* as such, the message, the songs *beyond humankind* in a temporal sense may be a fearsome thought. We are not to forget that the poem entitled *Fadensonnen* speaks about a *grayblack wasteness* (a landscape burnt to ashes?), a deserted waste land, in which we may see only a *thought striking the light-tone* – but no human being. Due to the extreme presence of technology in the (material) human culture, certain phenomena can be liberated that cannot be dominated by man anymore. Celan's poem, and the possible negative utopia that it suggests can be read as a warning. Citing Georg Simmel, the tragedy of human culture (mainly in terms of mental values) is in the fact

that after a while it may cease itself – man means the greatest danger to oneself, and not some external factor. (Simmel 1999: 75-93).

The Illusion of Immediacy

We may presume a tendency in Paul Celan's poetry according to which the poetic texts intend to cease, or at least decrease mediatedness and mediality, mainly the medium that has been proved to be imperfect for communication by these days: language. However, if art is not able to overcome the mediatedness by language, then it may experience to withdraw itself from all systems and laws of human world, creating its own reality. As it was mentioned above, art frequently mediates the world of the imaginary.

As if some of Celan's poems also tended to make art completely *privative*, ceasing or defying mediality and mediatedness by resigning from any type of mediation. Poems do not *mediate* anything more, only *stand* in themselves, beyond everyone and everything. This intention may be conceived in the late poem entitled *Stehen – To stand*.

JOHN FELSTINER'S ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

TO STAND, in the shadow
of a scar in the air.

Stand-for-no-one-and-nothing.
Unrecognized,
for you,
alone.

With all that has room within it,
even without

language.

THE ORIGINAL GERMAN POEM:

STEHEN im Schatten
des Wundenmals in der Luft.

Für-niemand-und-nichts-Stehn.
Unerkannt,
für dich
allein.

Mit allem, was darin Raum hat,
auch ohne
Sprache.

The poem places itself out of the dimension of time – it is also testified by the infinitive form of the first word of the text, lacking grammatical aspect or tense. This *standing* does not takes place sometime, even the *where* of the poem (*in the shadow of a scar in the air*) is questionable. We may not even state that it is some poetic speaker who *stands* – no more speaker, no more subject exists, it is merely the poem itself that withdraws itself from everywhere, into its own reality where nothing else exists beside it. This standing is also imaginable *even without language*, as the poem says – no more language, no more medium is necessary anymore, since nothing more is mediated. McLuhan's statement according to which all media contain another medium (McLuhan 1964) is suspended in this poetic context, since the poem refers to only itself without mediating any linguistic or non-linguistic message, placing itself out of technical

media, meanings, or anything tangible. From outside the poem is not graspable anymore, and anything can be valid only in its enclosed world. This way, the enclosed and seemingly unreachable world is able to create the illusion of immediacy, lacking any kind of mediation and mediality. Certainly, we can ask the question how understanding is possible if the poem speaks merely within its own reality, mediating, carrying no more meaning. This statement is evidently valid only within imaginary, artistic, poetic frameworks, and just for a certain time, since the reader, nevertheless, is *granted* something from the poetic world of the poem defining itself unreachable and free of mediation by reading and interpreting the text, at least receiving the splinters of this poetic reality, remaining at the level of intuition and suspicion, even if complete understanding does not seem possible anymore.

Essentially, the same idea of the cessation of mediality may be conceived in one of Celan's last poems entitled *Schreib dich nicht – Don't write yourself*:

JOHN FELSTINER'S ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

DON'T WRITE YOURSELF

in between worlds,

rise up against

multiple meanings,

trust the trail of tears

and learn to live.

THE ORIGINAL GERMAN POEM:

SCHREIB DICH NICHT

zwischen die Welten,

komm auf gegen

der Bedeutungen Vielfalt,

vertrau der Tränenspur

und lerne leben.

In the above poem the metaphor of understanding the world as *reading* repeatedly appears – the poetic speaker / the poem itself calls itself on not *writing itself between worlds*; that is, it should not take the role of the medium or experiment to mediate anything between the different dimensions of existence, for example between man and man, subject and subject, since due to the *illegibility of the world* and the extreme mediatedness the exact mediation of meanings is maybe impossible. The tragedy of language – and of other media – is in the fact that after a while they tend to eliminate themselves. Human culture evidently needs media (Pfeiffer 2005: 11-49), and medium can even be the synonym for art in certain contexts. However, a question arises: what sense does it have to try to mediate anything, if nothing can be perfectly mediated? Certain pieces of Paul Celan's oeuvre lead to the conclusion that they give up the intention of any form of mediation. The poem *rises up against multiple meanings* and does not intend to mediate anything from the chaotic and dubious flow of meanings, departing to a lonely travel (Celan 1996) and reach a world where mediatedness and mediation is no more necessary. This world is concealed within the poem itself. The poem can only trust *the trail of tears* – the tears shed for the pain of the lack of immediacy and the multiple mediatedness of the world. The poem can *learn to live* only if it reaches the self-enclosed state

of immediacy, standing for itself alone, where it is not exposed to language or any other technical medium. Certainly, this poetic withdrawal is only illusionary, yet for a moment, perhaps, we may feel as if the experience of immediacy became possible.

It may be an interesting observation that after the gloomy decades of the linguistic scepticism the desire for immediacy gradually recurs in the discourse of literature and literary studies of the present days (Kulcsár-Szabó 2003: 272-307), as it also seems to appear in some of Paul Celan's late poems. Although we know well that our culture and all human experience are originally mediated, and mediality belongs to the essence of human existence, the immediate experience of phenomenon seems to be impossible, it is good to hope that somehow it is possible to bypass mediality. Art and poetry within it as a way of speaking clearer and perhaps more immediate than everyday language – as Celan's poetry intending to demolish linguistic limits – may grant us the hope that we can experience certain phenomena in an immediate way, accessing their substance.

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